INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT BETWEEN MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN THE SOMALI COMMUNITY IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON: A QUALITATIVE STUDY TO UNDERSTAND ROOT CAUSES

By

Mikaela Freundlich

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Approved by:

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Second Reader

Abstract

Objectives

This study aims to examine the drivers of intergenerational conflict (IGC) among Somali immigrant women and first generation Somali-American girls living in Seattle, Washington.

Methods

In this IRB-approved interpretive qualitative study, data collection and analysis were based on narrative inquiry. A total of 13 women and girls participated.

Results

Data analysis indicated that the main driver of IGC in this community is the acculturation gap. Enablers of IGC were neighborhood violence and the current political culture. Interpersonal and community-level social capital was a protective factor against IGC.

Conclusions

This study shed light on the experiences of Somali women and girls relating to IGC and the complexities of living as Muslim immigrant/first generation women of color in the multicultural context of American society.

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Introduction

Intergenerational conflict (IGC) refers to the interpersonal conflict that occurs between parents and their children.[1] IGC represents one of the major challenges facing families of adolescents and emerging adults, and takes on special significance for migrants.[2,3] IGC is known to increase the risk of adolescent long-term maladjustment,[4] including depression and anxiety disorders,[5,6] poor academic performance,[7] learning and behavioral problems in school,[8] and gang involvement.[9] For the parents, IGC is a risk factor for heightened psychological distress,[10] feelings of dismay and betrayal.[11] and mental health problems.[12]

The drivers of IGC in migrant communities are fairly well understood, the main one being the acculturation gap. This commonly occurring phenomenon results from discrepancies in acculturation between migrant parents and their children.[13–19] Acculturation refers to the process of cultural exchange that occurs when two distinct cultures come into contact, resulting in changes to features of both the migrating and receiving cultures.[20] The children of migrant parents tend to acculturate quicker and easier than their parents, adhering to values of the host culture that diverge from those of their parents. This further complicates the typical generation gap during adolescent years by increasing tensions, misunderstandings, and miscommunications.[21]

The acculturation gap is more pronounced in families migrating from collectivist to individualistic cultures.[22] Collectivist cultures tend to value interdependence, hierarchy, and obedience,[23,24] whereas in individualistic cultures, individualism, independence, and egalitarianism are more commonly valued.[23,25,26] For this reason, the acculturation gap—or the

clash of values and expectations between migrant parents and their children due to the differing pace of acculturation—frequently weakens the parent-child bond, resulting in increased IGC, identity conflicts (particularly for the children), and difficulty navigating the settlement society[13,17,23,27–29] Additionally, the process of acculturation in and of itself can generate somatic, psychological, and social difficulties in individuals (i.e., acculturative stress).[30] This stress negatively affects ways in which parents interact with their children and vice versa, perpetuating IGC.[31]

One major aspect of the acculturation gap is language barriers. Children of migrant parents become more proficient with the local dominant language relatively quickly through school situations and social activities, whereas the parents tend to learn at a slower rate or are reluctant to practice the language to hold on to their cultural identity.[32] Because of this, the children often take on the role of family spokesperson, which creates a shift in the power balance within the family and can result in the parents losing their status.[33] This threatening of parental authority, coupled with the children's increased sense of agency as a result of their rapid transition into Western society and its cultural norms, can further disrupt family dynamics and parenting ways and lead to IGC.[24,31]

But the generational and acculturation gaps do not fully explain IGC in migrant populations. The incidence of IGC in these populations is further compounded by varying degrees of challenges that arise when first migrating to or in the process of settling in a new country. These challenges include difficulties establishing social networks, finding accommodation and employment, socioeconomic difficulties, accessing health insurance and healthcare, and discrimination, among others.[31,34] These challenges, in turn, are further

influenced by the political culture, institutional receptivity, and social attitudes towards immigrants in the settlement society, which can help or hinder the adaptation and acculturation processes, and therefore IGC incidence as well.[31]

It is important to note that IGC is not a phenomenon unique to migrant populations, but that it is a rather normative occurrence in families with adolescents who are going through biological, social, and psychological changes in their development.[35,36] However, it is equally important to understand that adolescents of migrant families experience acculturation-related and migration-related challenges in addition to "normative" developmental changes, which puts them at a higher risk for experiencing IGC and the negative health outcomes associated with it compared to their non-migrant counterparts.[12]

Background

The Somali refugee situation, now in its third decade, is among the most sustained in the world.[37] Over 870,000 Somalis are registered as refugees in the Horn of Africa and in Yemen, while an estimated 2.1 million men, women, and children are displaced within the country itself.[38] In Seattle, Washington, Somalis are the largest refugee group numbering over 2,500 (this number does not include Somalis who have become naturalized citizens as well as those born in the US).[39]

While resettlement and integration are challenges for most migrants, such challenges tend to be more evident amongst refugees. Refugees often experience a variety of hardships and traumatic events in their countries of origin, during their migration journeys, as well as when resettling in a new country. This is referred to as the Triple Trauma Paradigm.[40]

Somali refugees in particular find themselves in an unfamiliar environment where the culture is individualistic, which contrasts drastically with Somali collectivist culture.[16] Individualistic cultures emphasize self-maximization, self-reliance, individuation, and autonomy.[25,26] In most Western countries, whose cultures are usually individualistic, family dynamics as well as parenting behaviors and practices are conceptualized within this particular individualistic context.[41] In this way, the family structure tends to be more fluid and family relationships are less hierarchical. Children are taught to actively experiment with and question their environment and encouraged to learn self-care.[42] The emphasis tends to be on the child's autonomy, individual achievements and responsibility, and conformity to firm individual boundaries.[41]

In contrast, collectivist cultures emphasize interdependence and conformity to collective responsibility as well as indisputable obedience and respect for authority. Within this context, the family structure tends to be more hierarchical, consisting of authoritative parents and subservient children. The family commonly serves as the most important unit of society within such cultures. Children are socialized to be obedient, particularly towards elders, as well as mutually dependent.[2] In collectivist cultures, people who conform to the particular norms and values bring honor to the families, whereas those who fail to conform bring shame.[43] This is particularly true in Arab cultures, such as the Somali culture.

Research on the life experiences and perspectives of refugee and immigrant women and girls living in the U.S. is scant—particularly of those migrating from majority Muslim countries, and regarding IGC. Having this knowledge base enhances health program planning, implementation, and ultimately health outcomes,[44] which in turn may help reduce health

disparities for refugee and immigrant women and girls living in the US. For these reasons, as well as to be able to bring forward the unheard voices of Somali refugee and immigrant women and girls as a way to augment the public health discourse on refugee and immigrant health, a qualitative research study was conducted in a neighborhood in Seattle, Washington where a large population of Somalis currently reside and where IGC is reported as a major issue affecting their families and communities. Efforts to alleviate IGC in this community have shown some success,[45] but the specific causes and enablers of IGC have not yet been systematically explored.

Methods

In this interpretive qualitative study, data collection and analysis were based on narrative inquiry.[44] Narrative inquiry focuses on stories of real-life experiences and can be used to examine how cultural values and traditions influence women's and girls' relationship with their contextual situations as well as with their health and wellbeing.[46]

IRB

The institutional review board of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill approved the proposed study.

Participants

Participants were recruited by a community member and director of the Somali Family Safety Task Force (SFSTF)—a small non-profit organization in Seattle, Washington that provides services and resources to the Somali community living in the area. A convenience sampling strategy was used to select the participants. Data saturation was not sought due to time and funding constraints but also because every story is unique and provides something new.[47]

Participants were recruited during SFSTF's programming and other events. Five women and eight girls agreed to participate in the study. All of the participants were either Somali immigrants or first-generation Americans of Somali decent. All of the women were naturalized US citizens ages 30-55 who came to the US either as refugees or with a family-sponsored visa. All of the women were mothers of at least one adolescent girl and knew English, but with varying degrees of fluency. Some barely needed interpreter services, while others relied on the interpreter for most of the interview. The girls who agreed to participate were 13-17 years old and were all born in the US except one, who was born in an Eastern European country as a refugee and then immigrated to the US with her mother, also as a refugee. They all lived with their mothers who had migrated to the US as refugees or through family-sponsored visas. All of the girls were fluent in English.

Data collection

A Somali woman who spoke fluent English and Somali was present in all the interviews conducted with the mothers. Questions were asked in English and the interpreter immediately interpreted the question into Somali. Then the participant responded in Somali, and the interpreter immediately interpreted the response into English. This process occurred in four of the five interviews with the mothers, as one of them spoke English fluently and did not need an interpreter. There was no need for an interpreter during the interviews with the adolescent girls.

After introductions, the interpreter read the translated informed consent information to each potential participant who required interpreter services. Those who were fluent English speakers and did not require interpreter services were read the informed consent information

by the interviewer in English. All participants consented to being audio-recorded. Each participant was interviewed only once. The interviews, which where semi-structured, lasted anywhere between 30-60 minutes. The questions asked revolved around IGC, acculturation, the intergenerational acculturation gap, as well as around their experiences living in the US and in this particular neighborhood in Seattle, WA.

Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed and reviewed by the author for topical codes. A preliminary codebook was created by the author with these topical codes as well as with codes derived from the interview guide. First, two (one woman's and one girl's) interview transcripts were coded using the preliminary codebook to test for validity and reliability. The codebook was then modified accordingly, i.e. unclear codes were re-specified, redundant codes were consolidated, and inductive codes were added.

Using the revised codebook, a descriptive, within-case analysis was implemented to analyze each participant's responses in depth for themes.[48] After coding each interview, a summary memo was written to highlight key points related to IGC, acculturation, and other themes that had emerged. Memos were also written for more complex, dense quotations in order to further unpack themes. Memos were then reviewed and a new set of codes was created to be able to more deeply examine all data and interpret themes and patterns across cases and across subgroups (i.e., women and girls) related to IGC, acculturation, migration, identity, and other structural and systemic factors.[48] The goal in exploring data within each case was to depict unique aspects of participants' life experiences either as immigrants or as first

generation Americans.[44] The interpretive, across-case analysis was applied in order to showcase immigrant women's and first generation American girls' lives in all of their complexities.[44]

Results

All of the participants talked about the direct and indirect effects of IGC on themselves, their mother-daughter relationships, and their community. IGC was found to be driven and/or enabled by several factors that are complex, multifaceted and spanning across all levels of the social-ecological framework. The main driver was found to be the acculturation gap between the mothers and daughters; however, neighborhood violence and the current political culture, albeit indirectly, were also found to be enabling IGC. In addition, social capital was found to be a protective factor against IGC.

What Drives Intergenerational Conflict in this Community?

The acculturation gap. Consistent with the literature, the acculturation gap was found to explain IGC between Somali immigrant women and first generation Somali-American girls in this particular community. One mother talked about how difficult it is for her to raise kids in the US due to cultural differences between the American and Somali communities:

> "Being a parent in America is hard, because when I grew up, everybody knows each other. Like my mom didn't have to worry about, uh, someone's gonna kidnap me or kill me, or if I'm gonna do something bad. So when I, if I go like, ten blocks from [my house], another lady who knows my mom will be like, 'go back home' you know? So it's like a whole village that is raising your kid. Everybody knows each other by name, everybody's family… and you don't worry about it. And, also, our culture is like, we are so like, obedient. Like we are, we don't talk back to our parents, we don't have a voice, we don't have any opinion, we don't have, like, we respect— besides God, our parents are like our Gods, you know, we worship them, we respect them. And like, that's how I was raised. So raising teenagers in America, it's like, it's hard. They have a lot of voices! They get to say a lot of whys. 'Why? Why? Why? Why?'. And it's not something I was raised, you know? Like, 'what are you asking me, why? I just told you not to do it', you know?

> […] So it's very tough […] it's very challenging for any East African parent to raise children in America."

Another mother said:

> "The kids they think it's too hard rules, but the mentality they have our country, it's just— you automatically grow up thinking that way, like you're not supposed to do this stuff, you know? But in here, it's like the kids are, since they are kindergarten till up, they believe like free country, you can do this, you can do that. So when the mom says 'no you cannot do that', then [my daughter] thinks like, 'okay, but I'm [in a] free country, I can do this now' you know?"

Another mother said:

> "[My daughters] have this idea, you know, everything belong to them, […] *my* things. I work, you know, first thing I think about is my family members. You need something, how can I help them, you know, what do I need… it's like different priorities. But to them, it's like, my money or my things, and just like considering only themselves, you know what I mean?"

The daughters also spoke about the acculturation gap and the differing values between themselves and their mothers. One daughter spoke about how she thinks Somali mothers aren't equipped to raise their daughters in the US:

> "I just feel like Somali moms don't know how to raise American kids basically. They're Somali, and we're American. They don't know how to raise us."

Another daughter said:

> "I just think like, it's 2017. We're in America. Like come on, like update yourself. Like I just think like, why do I have to cook and clean? Why can't a guy cook and clean? Because I'm from America, that's what we do, you know? We're equal, but even if we're not equal technically, but we're trying to become equal. And there's people like that still have that older mindset, you can't, you know, get with the program now."

As this girl mentions, the data consistently showed that the acculturation gap manifests mainly around four interrelated domains: marriage/dating, domesticity, going out, and covering up. These domains are gendered, meaning that they reflect or involve gender differences in how they are constructed and practiced within each culture. But there are discrepancies in how

gender is constructed within individualistic American culture versus collectivist Somali culture. In the United States, gender is constructed based on its values of individualism, autonomy, and egalitarianism, while in Somalia, gender is constructed within the context of collectivism, interdependence, and respect for authority. This discrepancy results in two different ways of understanding gender roles and expectations, and although they overlap in some ways, they also differ significantly in others. Since the daughters are being raised in the US, the ways in which they are learning gender and the behaviors and attitudes associated with it are different from how their mothers learned gender in Somalia, and thus how they teach it to their daughters. This creates a significant clash between the mothers and daughters, often resulting in IGC. For example, one mother said:

> "In our culture, though, it's like women— they protect women a lot. When it comes to like rights and stuff, like, you cannot mistreat a woman, you cannot disrespect her, you cannot say bad names to her, you cannot hit her… But when it comes to like, I don't know whoever started this, but men don't clean and cook. It's women's job. So we raise our, like, I had four brothers, and we were four brothers and nine sisters. Nine or ten sisters. We did not used to eat until all the boys eat."

One of the main influencers dictating Somali gender roles and expectations is Islam. For example, one mother said:

> "[Our daughters] don't like the rules, they tell me 'that's old-fashioned, mom'. They think… old-fashioned. It's not old-fashioned, that our tradition, we are Muslim, you know, we need to learn how to, you know, supposed to be."

The daughters also recognized the importance of Islam in their culture. One daughter said:

> "Our religion is indented in our culture, like I said ninety-nine point nine percent of Somali people are Muslim so Islam is everything to us, like everything we do comes from there."

One important practice in Islam is covering one's body, particularly one's hair. This is because modesty is a highly valued principle in Islam. One mother said:

> "In Islam religion, cover your hair, just to... so people, it's modesty, you know? Just cover your hair, don't wear something that's very revealing, so people can like you for who you are, not how you look. You know? So you will see a woman all covered up, and when she goes inside the house and she takes off, she will have like beautiful hair, beautiful body… but that person [in the street] did not judge her based on her body."

Another woman, who had mentioned she had endured IGC with her daughter regarding her clothing choices, said she had told her daughter the following:

> "'[Daughter], do you wanna please people or you wanna please God? Because this is who you are. And God told you to wear it for a reason. And you are beautiful inside and everything. If you wanna please God, wear your scarf. If you wanna please people, then don't wear it.'"

Another mother talked about the implications of her daughter choosing not to cover up:

> "…if [my daughter] left the house, sometimes sleep over, wear weird clothes, you know? Shorts, not covered hair, like something, you know, no good. If she's wearing jeans, hijab is okay sometimes, no hijab is okay sometimes, you know, but sometimes, wearing like this here, tight clothes, you know? No good. People see them, I'm embarrassed, you know? They say 'what is going on, [participant]?' and I say 'guys, you know…'. […] But it's not only you, it's not only me, this country. This country. These kids they are American, but we try to our culture, push back, push back. Sometimes help, but this— she never say no, she say 'mommy okay, I will, mommy'. 'But I don't see, sometimes, you know, covered, but sometimes when you go out, I see'. […] Now I'm tired, no more. I don't wanna stress more."

But according to some of the girls, wearing a hijab is not always easy for a variety of reasons: sometimes non-Muslim American kids will tease them in school, and/or the daughters feel pressure to fit in and be liked. Other times they just don't want to be labeled a terrorist. But sometimes they simply want to show their hair. For example, one daughter said:

> "I have nice hair, I like to show my hair, and that clashes. Like wearing a scarf in America is kind of hard, you know? Like people are like, sometimes they're like 'terrorists' and stuff. And I like, I like to show my hair but I can't show my hair because I'm Muslim, but you know, I still be showing it sometimes."

Another reason why Somali women cover up is said to be because purity is highly valued in Islam. One of the daughters spoke to this:

> "[My mom] just thinks that girls should cover up their bodies, so men like, like, because your body is very pure, and no man deserves to see your body like that. Unless you're married, a man does not deserve to see your body like that."

Purity is also important when it comes to a woman's sexuality. For example, having sex before marriage is forbidden in Islam. One mother explains the reasoning behind this:

> "…no Muslim man is supposed to break any woman's virginity. That's like killing her. That's the same thing as killing someone. So if this woman is pure, you don't break her virginity until you marry her, you know?"

Another woman's explanation illustrated how disrespecting a woman is not only forbidden because of how it affects her purity, but also one's family:

> "…don't touch a female the wrong way, don't disrespect, because if you disrespect a female, it's like you disrespect your own sister, your mom. […] Because if you do somebody else's daughter, your sister is gonna be, you know, somebody else will do it, it just come around to you."

For this reason, as well as because modesty and purity are highly valued, the mothers tend to be quite strict with their daughters when it comes to the domains of marriage and dating. This creates a wide acculturation gap and often leads to IGC. For example, one mother said:

> "I tell [my daughters], I say 'it's not like that, you know we have a culture' and she says 'mama okay'. But it's not gonna work. I say 'when you marriage? Now you're 20 years old' and she say 'mommy, don't choose my marriage, I don't wanna marriage right now' and I say 'why are you wearing makeup and nice dress and going out, I'm not stupid'. She say 'don't control me mommy, that's weird, I'm not doing anything' she yell at me, and 'calm down, I'm not doing anything wrong, I need you future and be good girl, because if my people see you…'"

All of the daughters that were interviewed expressed their frustrations regarding the acculturation gap around marriage and dating. For example, one girl said:

> "Like, my aunt, my mom's sister, is like the opposite of my mom. So she's like 'oh no, Africans don't do this, Somali people don't do that, you're not supposed do this'. And she really is like always thinking about 'oh my reputation, if I do this, then this is going to happen', 'oh if I do that, then that's gonna happen'. Like her kids are super— she's super duper strict on her kids and her kids lie all the time to her […]. It's like her kids are all

> doing other things and like they talk to my mom because my mom is more open than their mom so they don't like, they don't trust telling their mom anything."

Another girl said:

> "No, you have to talk [to boys] like in daylight. Like not even Starbucks because it's shameful for two— a man and a woman to be out together when they're not married, or they're not nothing. So like, I don't know, like that's the thing, it's so weird. I don't know."

The girls are often held to a higher standard than boys when it comes to norms and expectations around marriage and dating. One mother said:

> "It's not fair, this is the thing, like it's culturally stupid. Like if you're not a virgin, like you're not pure, like 'a lot of people already played in this playground', that's what they say. So everybody needs to keep her virginity until she gets married."

One girl also said:

> "But girls, it's like 'if you do this, you're a hoe, you're like this, that, that. You can't do that'. Like if I have— if I even had a boyfriend, my mom would've flipped. But like my mom is a little cooler than other moms, but she would just be like, you know, if he's Somali, um, yeah. Girls have to be with Somali guys. A guy can do like another race or another ethnicity, but me, I have to be with Somali and have to— but my brother could be with black, Asian… as long as they're Muslim. But I have to be with Somali no matter what."

The consequences of not abiding by these expectations can be quite detrimental. For example, if a woman loses her virginity before marriage or if she simply has dated other men, it's going to be difficult for her to find someone who will want to marry her. This is because people will think she is no longer pure, her honor and integrity have been spoiled, and therefore that of her family as well. As a result, mothers tend to be very strict not only when it comes to letting them date, but also simply go out. This further widens the acculturation gap and creates all kinds of identity conflicts and IGC between the mothers and daughters. The girls in particular had a lot to say about this issue. One girl said:

> “I feel like it makes our parents even— our moms even more protective than they already are because parents, especially African parents, Somali parents, are really really protective of their daughters. I guess it's like kind of one of those things where it's like, they're still overprotective that they kind of like don't let them do certain things. I mean, my mom's a really open person so she like lets me do a lot of things, but a lot of these Somali moms wouldn't let their daughters go out to eat, go out to do this, go out to do that, like, come home late and things like that. […] So it's like one of those— yeah it's like too much for you to handle, but it's like also it's for you. It's like, I can't say 'oh, I don't want to do this because I don't want protection for myself' because obviously I do. But it's like, I don't want to have all these rules placed on top of me.”

Another girl said:

> “…there's so much things: we can't play sports, we can't, like, you're not allowed to play sports, you're not allowed to go out, you're not going out with your friends, and if you go out once— there used to be time where if I go out once, I cannot go out for so long. And like you can't even go to your friend's house multiple times. Your mom is gonna be like, 'she can come here', because she doesn't want the other ladies' moms being like, 'your daughter is always at my house'. ‘Cus that's shameful. […] They don't want you talking to boys. They don't want you— if you like, everything everything, it's too much, the way you dress, like it's just so overwhelming like you don't even know how to act, like I don't like that, when I feel stuck on how to be, like, I can't do anything and when you get to a certain age it's really disgusting. Like when you're 17 and you don't even leave your house. […] And she's too strict sometimes, and I don't like it.”

Another girl said:

> “First of all, we don't like shame. Somali people, we want to be the best. Every family wants to be like, known, like amazing smart kids, good kids, learn the Quran, like good Muslims, like respectful children that help their mom out. Like you don't wanna have shame on your name. So people come and say, 'oh I seen your daughter out here. I seen your daughter out', even if it doesn't hurt at all to walk to [supermarket], […] they're gonna call 'em and be like, 'I saw your daughter walking out on the street'. Literally. And to you, that's like, what the heck is the problem, walking on the street? But like, to them, they're like, 'I seen your daughter out'. Which is why, why, why are you acting like I'm supposed to be— I’m allergic to sunlight or something, like I have to stay in the house all day. […] If I want to go out and my mom's like no, that makes me mad. I'm like, 'why?', she's like, 'cus I said so'. I'm like, 'why?', she's like, 'don't question me', I'm like [takes deep breath] 'why!?', like I don't know why you're making me stay here. I'm just going to sit in the house and use my phone. What's the point of me being here when I can be outside doing things? That's one thing, staying home all the time, that's for girls mainly. Not going out.”

Another girl said:

> “They let the kids, like the boys go out more and do more stuff than they let the girls. And, like, that's a problem. Like I think it's a real problem. But I mean they say it's a part of the culture or whatever, but, um, but I don't think that's right. […] I mean for like a lot of parents, like a lot of moms, like especially the ones with like older sons and stuff, like, I mean they feel really really overprotective of their daughters and stuff. Which I think that's why they want them to stay in the house or they don't want them to wear certain stuff, or like, I mean I understand, but then, I feel like we should also have, like, some choices of what we want to do and like, going out and stuff, I mean like not in the night or something, but if like in the day, if we wanna just go out and chill, then I think we should.”

Another girl said:

> “…I hate that. It's because we're not in Africa no more, like girls not going out is not a thing, girls going out in America is normal. That's normal. It's not a— girls going out is not shameful anymore. But since they brought their Somali culture here, whether we're Somali or not, those like cultural norms are still practiced here, and I don't like that because I'm not just, I'm Somali but I'm Somali-American, so I have a different culture. So I feel like they cannot force their beliefs onto me.”

Some of the girls have better relationships with their moms than others, and it largely depends on how wide the acculturation gap is. So as the acculturation gap widens, the likelihood of experiencing identity conflicts and IGC rises. The girls are particularly prone to experiencing identity conflicts due to the discrepancies between what they learn in school and in the media and what they learn from their mothers and their Somali culture in general. For example, one girl expressed her frustration with not being able to date before marriage, but then also said:

> “I was shocked to come to America and find that people can get in relationships, move in together, have a kid, they still aren't married yet, and they're like, they're living the marriage life though, when they're like, when there's talks about marriage, like I'm like, 'why now? You guys already have a kid, you guys already live together, you guys are already sharing your life, just getting married, you guys should just gotten married before you had a kid [laughs]'. Like that's our culture, you have to get married, then you can move in together, then you have a kid. It goes from there. That should be— I thought that was for everyone. But in America like, I swear people just full-on, they're like, 'let's talk about having kids', I'm like, 'let's talk about getting married', [laughs] like why are you talking about kids? It's crazy like that's shocking to me.”

Another girl talked about her identity conflicts when asked about whether she would want to ever visit Somalia, bringing up the issue of hostility and discrimination towards immigrants in the US:

> "I'm also in this kind of like confusing borderline between like, 'oh, I don't know if I'm mostly American or Somali'. And then, when I go to Somalia, I'll be American to them. So it's like [in America] we're not welcome, there we're kind of welcome, but it's also like, there's like a borderline too. […] And they're gonna tell us, they're gonna treat us like, 'these girls, they're not really Somali, they don't have no culture' and stuff. […] So it's like, kind of hard between both cultures not welcoming you. It's like, kinda weird."

Another girl spoke to this "confusing borderline", stating:

> "I'm more American. I'm both. I'm 75 percent American, 25 percent Somali. Or I wish I could do it different, 70-30. No 60-40, 60-40. Yeah, perfect, 60-40. 60 percent American, 40 percent Somali."

Some of the mothers expressed some identity conflicts as well, which affected their parental practices. This woman, for example, after talking about how she dislikes individualistic American culture, also said:

> "…I talk to my kids. I compromise with my kids, you know, I'm like, okay, you do this, I do that for you. I'll give you everything you want, you follow the rules. You know? And I always set them up for like, to get education, to be independent, to be like, make sure that you set your life, like, I'm teaching them to be the selfish American kids [laughs]. Worry about yourself, worry about yourself first, you know?"

The same mother recognized how her conflicting identities have resulted in ineffective parental practices in the past:

> "Because I'm a young mom, so when you are young mom, you're trying to learn how to be a mom yourself, so I wasn't mature, when I had them I was very young, I was like 19, 20, and 21, when I had my oldest one I was 17. So the relationship I have with them was, it was very hard. Because I was trying to be, I was trying to be the same parent as my mom was in this culture. And that does not happen, like it's not gonna work. […] My daughters, they are, they be like, between the age 12 to 15, we are on world war one, we are like, on enemies. They like, they try to— like, they make wrong choices, and when I say no, they hate me. I never said to my mom, 'I hate you'. If I said to my mom 'I hate you' in Somalia, I would not have teeth in my mouth [laughs] because the discipline

> is different. And here, the discipline is different too, like, so you will watch your kids telling you 'I hate you, mom, why you do this!?" You know? We never did that in Africa. So, like, I used to ground them. Take everything away from them. TV, cell phone, laptop… everything. So, like, I used to ground them. […] [My daughter], who was like in 8th grade, 9th grade, she drove me crazy. And one day I sit down with her and I was like, we need to change this behavior, you know? Like, my experience, explain to her, like things I don't share with people I share with her."

Another consequence of the mothers' strictness and overprotection is an overwhelming sense of helplessness among the daughters. For example, one daughter said:

> "And there's no excuse you can tell your mom that's okay. 'Four hours, what were you doing for--?'. 'I was at the community center'. For other kids, it's like, 'Oh! the community center!'. […] I stayed after school, my mom was like, 'till five, what were you doing till five?'. Like that's like they need to know what you're doing and there's, uh, these are the things you're okay to do, and if you're not doing one of those things, you can't do nothing. So it's like, it's just very stuck and then you do what you want, and you just get in trouble. And I remember one day, I don't remember what I did, but she was not trying to let me go to school the next day. And I wanted to go to school. I love school. 'Cus that's the only place I could go. And then another thing is Somali kids, since we can't do anything else, we take that space in school to goof around, hang out with our friends, laugh at our friends... because that's the only time we have to do that, because all of our friends kick it with each other after school, but I don't have that."

Another daughter said:

> "That's what they always say to my mom, they're like, 'what's the point of telling [our mom], you already know she's going to say no, so I'm just not going to tell her anyways, like I'll find a really good time to tell her'. But like, either I'm not going to tell her at all or it's just not going happen at all. So they just don't do it at all. And it's just, I guess it's really hard for them because of how she is. So it's like, all of this like Somali culture and all that is like the only thing [their mom] thinks about. She's like, 'oh, my reputation, if you guys do this, this, and that'. But the thing is she's already ruining her reputation because she's not letting them be open to stuff. And I feel like that's what a lot of Somali parents do."

Another daughter said:

> "I would tell Somali people to get a little bit more American, and I would tell the Somali girls to get a little bit more Somali. If that makes sense. Like I'd tell them, 'each of us need to put in a little effort.' But more Somali— Somali moms, moms are moms. They're not gonna change. […] Like I don't even think about asking [my mom], because I know what she's gonna say, she's gonna say no. […] when she doesn't understand my

> emotions, I be like 'just understand!' Like she doesn't understand that it makes me mad. She's so Somali. She just doesn't understand."

Several daughters also talked about how they often resort to lying to their moms when their moms are being too strict. One daughter talked about her experience lying to her mother and what that did to their relationship:

> "It made me like not like my mom. And it made her not really like me that much either. She loves me unconditionally, but, she never liked me. I didn't really like her either. And I have a lot of friends who their whole life is a lie when it comes to them and their parents, like their parents don't even know anything about them or who they are or what they do. […] And how can you still have a good relationship with someone that doesn't even know you? You guys are like strangers. That's your mom. That's with everyone, like everyone's like, they lie."

But in spite of the mothers' strictness and overprotection of their daughters, or perhaps because of it, the girls don't always bear in mind where their mothers are coming from. Familial honor and reputation are important to their mothers, yes, but Somali mothers also have to deal with additional challenges that are common to migrants. One of the biggest challenges that came up in the interviews is the (often perceived) lack of safety and fear that comes from migrating to an unfamiliar place. This is another reason why Somali mothers tend to be so strict on their daughters—they are simply afraid. For example, one mother said:

> "If the kids leave, they will not— I will not know, like, what if they just run away? Like where are they gonna go? I don't know anybody here, I don't have anybody here, who am I gonna ask? So the kids can just go to another state or another— or they can get kidnapped or do something, so something like that, you know? I'm concerned the kids, I won't be able to find if they disappear."

Another mother said:

> "So like kids, they need guidance, like until they are an adult and they can make decisions for themselves, they need to do what you tell them to do, because otherwise, if you let them do whatever they want to do that makes them happy, they gonna end up in the wrong place, and then you end up heartbroken, you think they gonna die, or they gonna end up in jail, and you still won't be able to, like, won't be able to get them out of

> jail, […] or someone might shoot them, some horrible stuff might happen to them you know? So, parents worry, like they worry a lot. Like every mom here."

Another mother talked about how Somali daughters are running away from home and dropping out of school, and how much that worries her:

> "…One woman, she's my friend, her daughter run away. After that, we called the cops. She's 17 years, I remember. 2013. A lot of Somalian girls run away the house. After that, the cop woman, she say 'this is free country mom, if she's 17, we can't control. We can't do anything to help you' and she dropped the school. So sometimes issues, there is, you know, too hard."

This fear is further compounded by the fact that many of these women are single mothers and have to take care of numerous children—all of the women that were interviewed had at least four children and two of the five were single mothers, which made them the sole breadwinners of the family. One of the girls noticed how this affected her mother:

> "My mom just be stressed out a lot, 'cus [she has] a lot of kids, worrying about where they're at, and how they're doing. […] It's like she's scared of what's out there."

One mother talked about how difficult it was for her, both emotionally and financially, to be a single mother in the US, explaining that the reason why she became a single mother was precisely because of the acculturation gap between herself and her ex-husband:

> "The boys ate first. Nine sisters in one room and four boys in one room. That's like, not even equal. And, like, you don't get to go anywhere unless your brother says okay. And also, it's like, everything was boys first. So every mom raises their sons like they are like, 'oh, he is the man of the house' like, so he doesn't have to cook. They got up for him, they make breakfast, sisters will get up, make breakfast, they wash their clothes for them, they iron their clothes for them… […] So, I'm just saying, it's like, so that, the parents raise their kids like that, and when they raise their kids like that, then the guy gets married and then he doesn't, like he expects the same treatments he was getting from his mom's house, uh, from his wife. And that's gonna be a big conflict, you're gonna be mentally exhausted by the end, when you have to cook and clean and do all the chores, and then go to work and then take care of the kids, and pick them up from daycare, change the diapers… it's like, you become a zombie, like I was like, I cannot do this anymore, you know? And that's why there is a lot of marriages that are failing in America, because like especially the older moms that grew up in Somalia, […] they're

> like, ‘my son, my son, we pamper him so much…’. I only have one son, I love him so much, I pamper him too, but when it comes to my daughters, he needs to respect them and he needs to do chores the same way.”

Another mother talked about the economic stress she has had to endure since coming to the US:

> “…it’s just like [you’re] not consistently worried [in Somalia], you know, what’s gonna happen and how things happen and bills and things. It’s not like here [in the US], everything, like, you know, paper, all those things. It’s not that, it’s more relaxed [in Somalia], there’s fresh food, you know, fresh air, it’s like, sunny there, no bad weather, no nothing… [sighs].”

Several mothers also talked about how much they miss home and how much they wish they could go back. But despite this homesickness, they also talked about how the war made them more resilient. For example, one mother said:

> “So I have been in a war and it’s the most terrifying thing that will ever happen to you. It’s like, it’s… it’s like, you hear, you don’t know what to take, and what to leave, you don’t even know if you have shoes on, you just run. Like, you just run, you know? I don’t even know sometimes what direction you’re running. […] So you don’t know who’s shooting you, like, people are just [makes shooting noise]. So when you go through that trauma… and actually, I never talked to anybody about it, I need to talk to somebody about it. But it’s like, anything else that happens, it’s not that big a deal. It’s like, I overcome that and I can overcome anything else.”

The acculturation gap is also exacerbated by language barriers. A few participants talked about this issue. For example, one daughter said:

> “I feel like that's one thing that really makes our communicate— [my mother and my] relationship really good because a lot of these moms don't know English, their daughters don't know Somali. So first of all, they can't even communicate. And then it's like their relationship is just not good because 'oh I can't do this, you don't let me do that, I don't talk want to talk to you about it'. They're just not going to talk at all.”

However, language barriers don’t seem to affect this particular community in a significant way. The majority of the women and girls interviewed either did not bring up this issue or if they did, they said that it was not an issue in their household.

What Other Factors Are Enabling Intergenerational Conflict in this Community?

Even though the acculturation gap is the major determinant of IGC in this community, it doesn't entirely explain its frequency and severity. Additional community, institutional, and societal-level factors also play a significant role in enabling IGC, the main ones being neighborhood violence and the current political culture.

Neighborhood violence. All of the participants brought up the issue of gang violence in the neighborhood. It has been happening for a while now, but according to the participants, the violence has become more frequent and severe. This results in serious psychological distress for both the mothers and daughters. For example, one mother talked about the fear that she experiences as a result of the gang violence:

> "I haven't had any challenges [living in this neighborhood] personally, but sometimes there are shootings in the neighborhood and kids are shooting each other, and it makes me very worried and scared."

Another mother said:

> "Right now, the challenge is for the teenagers. I have teenagers, and there's a lot of things going on, like, you know, from gangs and stuff like that. That's my main concern, but other than that, I really like the area."

The girls also talked about the fear and lack of safety they feel in this neighborhood. For example, one girl said:

> "[Gang violence] is like impacting a lot of places now, it's getting bigger, and I just like I'm not saying [this neighborhood] before was better, but it was at least... It was at least like, yeah, it was safer than how it is now, because a lot of people are losing their lives over things that is very like unnecessary and irrelevant."

Another girl said:

> "Recently, it's really become scary. Like the hood's like, we never used to have shootings and killings. And now, I don't know why, but everyone's killing each other. Well like everyone's out for each other and it makes me sad."

Another girl said:

> "Like yesterday somebody got shot ten times. It's really sad. And it's very, um, I don't know, I like the place, but like I just don't like the violence around here."

The mothers and daughters tend to experience psychological distress resulting from neighborhood violence somewhat differently and for different reasons. One girl brought up the paradox of how sometimes her neighborhood feels like a supportive family, while other times it feels like a coercive gang:

> "The hardest part is... Like, street gangs, and like, I don't know. Just like, people here are like really, I mean it's like a family. But then it's also like a gang. So like, if you live here you can't go to like, places like [nearby neighborhood] or like [other nearby neighborhood] and stuff. 'Cus like, it's very strict and stuff. People like really pressure you to come in a gang and stuff like that, as you get older."

Another girl also talked about these contradicting feelings:

> "I mean, I don't like living in this kind of place because I just feel like so much stuff goes on here that I don't like and I have to worry about people and I have to like, you grow up close to people, it's a neighborhood and— it's a community, so you get really close to people and then, and then like, there's like violence here and like, all that and it's just, it's scary. I'd like to live in a very calm place where I never have to worry about people dying and stuff."

This fear and psychological distress resulting from neighborhood violence significantly affect mother-daughter relationships, as mothers become increasingly strict and protective of their daughters, enabling IGC to occur. However, several girls talked about how, in their opinion, the differential parental practices on boys versus girls has actually led to the high prevalence of gang violence in this neighborhood:

> "And then our moms, let's go back to them. They don't understand how to keep their sons in line, okay? They want to have good sons but they let their sons go out, stay out all types of night, do what they want to do, hang out with who they wanna hang out with… 'cus they're boys, you can't say nothing to the boys."

Another girl said:

> "I feel like it came from the fact that they were so strict on their daughters that they weren't looking at their sons. And that's literally the whole dynamic, like everyone, everyone's mom is like, 'oh I'm strict on my daughter, Imma pay attention to what she's doing, Imma see what she's doing, Imma see what she's up to'. But then […] they're leaving their sons outside, like not telling them what to do, not telling them, 'where are you going?', not doing anything. […] So their sons are all willingly doing whatever they want to do, getting in trouble, doing all that... but they're not paying attention to it 'cus they're looking at their daughters."

Some mothers also talked about how the acculturation gap, coupled with single motherhood and economic stress, can also lead to increased gang involvement among their sons. One mother said:

> "[The boys] wanna also like, have a community. Because if you're working eight-ten hours, and you wanna, you— like, in Africa, you don't have to sit and talk with your kids. I never had a conversation with my mom in my life. I never even said 'hi, how are you mommy?'. But in here, you have to talk to your kids. And if you work eight hours and if you have five children, you don't have five hours to talk to them, you're exhausted. You have to cook, and this. So these kids get a lot of attention from these people, the community, the gang members and stuff, and then that's how they end up taking the wrong way. […] So these kids, they need just, someone to make them feel like they belong. They, so, and like the families here are not having that. It's so hard to work and be a parent."

Several girls also shared this perspective—that the boys aren't getting the sense of community and belonging from their homes, so they turn to the streets. For example, one girl said:

> "My brother, it's like he did it to— he's the only boy, and he doesn't really have like someone else to teach him. So like he just has my dad, but my dad's always just screaming at him. So like he wants to be a part of something bigger than him. And like he wants— he wants that feeling of brotherhood, you know? […] And someone to always have your back. And that's what gangs are like. Like you have each other's backs, you know? But at the end of the day, you don't really, because if someone dies, like that's the only person that's gonna go… You know what I mean? That's gonna go to the grave. Your friend is not gonna come with you, you know?"

Many of the participants, both mothers and daughters, talked about how a lot of youth from their community are in prison due to gang involvement. One girl, for example, talked about

how her mother is actually being more protective of her brother than she is of her because of this issue:

> "...but it's still scary [for my mom] to let [my brother] go out and stuff like that because, you know, at the end of the day, you have to be really protective about your son. He can get killed at any moment, a police officer could kill them for doing something really dumb or anything or just— he could just get killed really quickly, so it's like even harder when it's a guy and my mom's like, it's not that she's more strict on him, but it's like she needs him to like, she needs to be knowing everything that he's doing. […] And I feel like that's one of the reasons why my brother is like not— he doesn't like do a lot of what the guys in the community do because he's really smart and like, he knows exactly where he wants to be in life and what he wants to do and all that. […] [My brother] is always worrying about what— 'oh, my life is this, my life is that, I'm trying to get my family out the hood, I'm trying to do this and that for my family' and all that. […] And I have two cousins that are in jail. So it's like, my brother's already like, 'oh I don't want to end up like that, so I'm not going to do what they did and I'm not going to be dumb like them, so I'm not going to get myself into that situation because there's already two down.'"

Another girl said:

> "And another thing about it that made me sad, was I was talking to one of [the gang members] and I was like, 'why don't you just get a job?' and he's like 'my record's messed up'. I was like, 'okay', he's like, 'I can never get a job'. So it's so sad that they put people in jail and then let them out and they expect them to have a life, well what kind of life are they supposed to live, they can't live, they have no money, […] they won't get hired anywhere. And it's hard to get a degree and all that, and it's like, once you can't get hired anywhere, and you need money, what are you gonna do to get money? The same thing you did last time. And you're gonna get yourself arrested again. But they keep putting us out in this world with no tools like we can't get hired, it just makes me sad, that somebody has a record like they can never get hired. Even in like 20 years, because what if they changed? What if they made a mistake? What if you don't understand why they were there to begin with? This guy, he's 17, he's never gonna— his life is messed up, like, when he gets married, how is he gonna provide for his kids? How is he gonna go to like, everything, it's like, it's against us. That's why they keep doing what they're doing."

Neighborhood violence in this community is a result of a variety of interlocking factors working together to create an environment where the boys feel a need to join a gang and use gun violence. This, in turn, adds to the fear and psychological distress among the mothers and

daughters. It also causes feelings of helplessness, particularly in the context of institutional racism and xenophobia. For example, one girl said:

> "It's one of those things that's like, why should this be happening when we're already like [being discriminated against]? But it happens anyways because like there's nothing we can do about it. It's not like we're gonna say, 'oh stop being in a gang, stop doing this' and everyone's just gonna stop, it's just going to keep going, there's going to be more bloodshed, and it's just not going to end."

Neighborhood violence doesn't directly cause IGC, but it certainly contributes to the burden of acculturative stress, parenting stress, and psychological distress resulting from experiencing prejudice and discrimination. Further, it becomes clear that the issue of gang violence in this community is affected by broader systems and institutions, and the ways in which these often perpetuate oppression.

The current political culture. Many participants brought up the current political culture at some point during the interview, illustrating how it affects their wellbeing and relationships with others. For example, all of the daughters mentioned Donald Trump in their interviews, and how his presidential election has enabled a culture of hostility and discrimination towards them due to their race, nationality, and religion. One girl said:

> "But here, it's like, all the side eyes, I'm like, dude, like the whispering, and like, it's just so weird. I don't like it. But I don't— I really don't like it here. I mean, oh, I do like America, but lately, this year 2017, I don't like America. Like, Donald Trump got elected and I swear, I'm blaming him for everything that happened this year. […] And then, justice, when I hear the word justice, I'll be like 'yeah, whatever'. Like I just, I just don't like this country, like I just don't. And like now that Donald Trump is president, and like, the amount of people that voted for him... It just really makes me question, like, what kind of people are you guys [referring to white Americans]? Like you guys voted for this guy. So many people voted for him, for him to be president. [...] It just makes me just not wanna be American."

Another girl said:

> "I feel like it came from [Trump], like, everyone started feeling bold and feeling like, 'oh, I can do this because Donald Trump is president', 'oh, I could do that because Donald Trump is president'. Like, 'I have back-up' like, 'no one can do anything to me because the president's doing it, Imma do it too'. So it's like, it's all, like, bouncing off of him, I would say. […] It's like, it wasn't like that before because they couldn't say it, they didn't have anyone to back them up, like we had a black president. No one was like, no one had like enough nerve to actually even say, 'oh I don't like you, go back to your country' or anything like that. […] I mean, I've obviously lived here for my whole life, because I was born here and everything, but I didn't really notice any racism or anything like that, until now like 2017, is the year I actually was like, 'oh people are still racist' […]. Because it wasn't really one of those things that were like, out, and it's like, as soon as Donald Trump became president, it came out to light that everyone could like say, 'oh, I don't like you because you have a hijab on', or 'I don't like you because of this and that'."

Another girl said:

> "I don't like, like we're going back, I feel like we're going back in time, like the way black people are being treated, it's not only black people, even other people, like everybody's so— some people are so discriminating. You know? […] So people are just so— ever since Trump became president, you've just been hearing so much more horrible stuff going on. Like why? We never had to worry about this when Obama was the president like. So that's what I don't like about America."

Most mothers did not talk about experiencing issues around hostility and discrimination based on their race, nationality, or religion. In fact, they were mostly grateful for the institutional receptivity and increased opportunities they have found in the US. A couple of mothers, however, did bring up the issue of Islamophobia. One mother said:

> "…like right now for me challenging is that like, being Muslim. It's kinda like, it's becoming something that people are scared of, you know, like someone else Muslim does that, and someone who claims to be Muslim does something bad, and then everybody, the whole people that are in the religion— and I'm scared that some day I'm going to get fired or something, that people— because one day I remember I was at the bank and I was in the line but I forgot my card so I left to go get my card and I came back, I wasn't even trying to go back in the line I was just gonna start in the back, and this lady just yelled at me, she's like 'you, Muslim, ehh!' you know, 'you better go back in the line' you know, that kind of stuff. And she just started cussing me and everything. […] 'Cus she had all her face on me, like 'get out!'. […] And I just wanted to punch her, but… [laughs] so that was very challenging like, not being able to be yourself."

Another mother said:

> “Even if it, like, you will see [the discrimination], you will recognize it, but it’s not like, something that’s very clear, you know? So if you don’t get a job, you know they didn’t take you because you don’t speak English, but they don’t say that to you.”

But this hostility and discrimination is not necessarily something new. Many of the girls talked about the bullying and teasing they endured in school due to their cultural identity, long before Trump became president. One girl said:

> “We like our culture, we love our culture and that's the way we keep it around people who speak our language, around people who believe the same things as us. And also because, um, other people don't have that much respect for Africans, and growing up, people didn't really respect Africans, like they made it seem like we were something disgusting. So you kind of grow to like, not hate them, but like, I don't want to be around you.”

Another girl said:

> “I go to— you know how I said I go to two schools? I go to [school name] high school and that school is mainly Caucasian people. And it's like every time, because […] I don't really have any friends there, so every time I'm walking into the building it's like, I walk into the building, and it's like they just all stare at me. It's like they never saw this in their entire life, literally. So like, they're just staring at me, like I just see a whole bunch of people just staring at me, just getting side eyes. And I'm just, I just continue to walk, and people are just, like, look at me like really weird because I'm African and they're all white and it's like I guess it's weird to them ‘cus they don't see it.”

A few girls also talked about experiencing significant identity conflicts that have resulted from living in this racialized country. For example, one girl said:

> “I'm like, first of all, I know I'm not black. I am black, but I'm not black, like I know where I came from. […] And I'm like, I know I'm Somali, I know I'm not black, just black, I know exactly where I come from, but why are you— what do you mean, 'I'm not black'? […] I've been treated like, to be honest, black people, they get treated just like us. If a police officer would say things, like, 'oh no, you're not black, you're Somali'. […] Like there's gonna be— there’s no difference when they see my skin color. They don't care. It only makes it worse for me that I have a scarf on my head, but if I'm— if I take the scarf off, to them I'm black. They don't care about, 'are you Ethiopian before I shoot you?' like, no, they're just gonna do what they do like they don't care. And I don't like that. I really never liked that, when people tell me that I'm not black. I'm like, I'm not trying to be— so it makes me very cautious of my actions all the time, like I don't know how to act, like I'm always stuck.”

What Factors Protect against Intergenerational Conflict in this Community?

Somali mothers and Somali-American daughters face many challenges that either drive or enable the occurrence of IGC. However, the data also showed that these women and girls have certain (often intangible) attitudes and aspects of their lives that actually protect against IGC.

Social capital. Social capital is defined in terms of networks, relationships, and trust, and the way in which these allow agents to be more effective in achieving social cohesion, and in turn, positive health outcomes.[49,50] In this study, when the mothers and daughters mentioned (1) instances of trust, empathy, tolerance, and support at an interpersonal level, and/or (2) availability of resources, feelings of inclusion, and support at a community level, it was clear that the mother-daughter bonds were strengthened and their community became more cohesive. This interpersonal and social cohesion was found to protect against IGC. For example, several daughters talked about how much they appreciated their moms' attempts to empathize with and tolerate American culture. One daughter said:

> "My mom isn't— she's Americanized, but she has a lot of her own culture. She understands American culture. She might not do the things all Americans do, she still has her culture. But she's like, 'but my kids are American and I understand American culture' and like 'I'm gonna have an open mind to those things, like even if it's not my belief, I'll have open mind to it for my kids, 'cus that's their belief'."

Another daughter said:

> "Like I can tell my mom, 'hey mom, I'm going out with my friends', 'hey mom, I'm going out with my boyfriend' or whatever, you know, I could tell her that, and she's not going to be like, 'oh you can't do that' because she already knows about it and like she can't like, if someone tries to say, 'oh I saw your daughter doing this', she's like 'oh I already know'. So they can't say anything to her. And then my aunt, it's like her kids are all doing other things and like they talk to my mom because my mom is more open than their mom so they don't like, they don't trust telling their mom anything."

Another girl said:

> "But like even if [my friend's mom] was more open, she could guide [her daughters] to make way better decisions, you know? And like who knows if they would listen, but then again, that's their mother. Everyone loves their mom, so like everyone's going to take their mom's advice. I feel like your mom's your— if you have a good relationship with your mom, like, what she says to you means to you more than anything else. […] Like [my mom] really knows what I should and shouldn't be doing because she's 35 and she's been there and done that multiple times. Her advice and guidance can keep me from committing so many sins or shame to myself and to her. […] It's like the more open you are with your children, […] 'cus the thing about my mom is like, she's, she's smart you know? So if her kids are open to her, yeah her kids are doing these things, but she can guide them the best way to go about it, the best way— the best decisions to make, the right things to do, the things not to do, the things... how you should go about the situation."

Another girl said:

> "She, my mom, she supports my goals. Even if it's not the goals that— she sees the good in most situations, like that's what's good about her. And she's cool. Like I could talk about boys, like and then she'll be like 'girl, that's cus you're cute'."

Several mothers also talked about the importance of recognizing the cultural differences

between the US and Somalia while also teaching their daughters about Somali cultural identity.

For example, one mother said:

> "[United States] culture is different. […] It's not bad, and it's not good. It is the system. Because the culture is different. […] So when we live here, we cannot be like back home. Because since we come new country, we have to take some of opportunity here. Our kids, […] we cannot say 'ohh! This is…' I talk about our history, our family, how we grow up, how our parents they do— talk to them. But still, it's different. Back home— some opportunity [our daughters] have we don't have. […] I tell [my daughter] everything. When I feel she's that age [teenager], I explain her. And I teach in our religion, what we believe. So I tell her, this is the way you supposed to do, but if you do that way, it's up to you. It's this way, and… she understand it and I show her, she have some— her aunts grow up here, and I tell her, 'if you do this, you become like your aunt. […] I always tell her, when I see something, I always tell her, 'this is this'. And always she keep— whenever she see new things in the outside, she come to me and she ask me. She says, 'mommy, I hear this, this is going on, what is this?' and I say 'this is…' I explain her."

Another mother said:

> "I'm not really strict culturally, because this is also, even though I have a culture, but this is also where they are. This is their culture as Americans, they are American kids, their culture is here. My main concern is my religion to them. Say 'okay, you cannot act in my culture because this is where you're from, and I can't tell you to adopt my own culture. But respect who you are and, you know, every time you go outside, remember who you represent, you know, you are my child and everybody knows you as my child, don't disrespect me, because when you do outside bad things, you're disrespecting me. But as a religion, keep it always as it is, you know, straightforward. Nothing, you know, black and white. Culture, you can change', because we have another culture and they have schools, their friends, you know, who they are, and what they know, this is all they know."

Another mother said:

> "In my opinion, since I was raised wearing this type of clothes [referring to traditional Somali clothes], my daughter who grew up here and was born here, they can wear pants, because they have to go to work, they have to blend in with the society they live in. So I don't see a problem with her wearing pants."

Another mother said:

> "One thing that I really like, I really love America, like life in America is— I really love it, like I don't how my life would be if I was in Africa. But raising American kids, like my kids, sometimes, not all the time, it's like, the way the are, this age, I wasn't like that at their age. At their age I was married. And I was way mature, like I felt like I was mentally, I felt like I was 19, 18. Then when I was 23, I decided like whoa, what happened to the past few years in my life? It's like I woke up from a long sleep. So I didn't get to be a kid. So usually, when you don't get to be a kid at a young age, you end up becoming a kid when you're older. So that's why I want my kids to be kids at this age. Like I want them to— they wanna go to movies, they can go to movies. They wanna go play something, they can play. If they want something, as long as they let me know. So when they get married, they don't feel like they are child, you know, like 'I did that, I already did that'."

This mother talks about how she is able to empathize with her daughters because she felt that she didn't get to experience normative adolescent development, so through open communication and compromise, IGC is prevented. This mother also said:

> "These kids, they like, I wanna teach them about trust, like you need to earn trust. And you need to be responsible, and when your mom, like when you tell your mom, 'mommy, I wanna go out, I'll be back by eight o'clock' you be back at eight o'clock to show you're responsible. These kids, when they leave the house, they leave like an animal leave a cage. They never come back until you go find them. So basically it's like

> there's no trust. And I always tell them, trust is something very important. Like, earn it, you don't just— nobody gives it to you. You have to earn it, you have to show that you're responsible, you have to show that you can be trusted. […] Like be responsible, come on time, even if you can't come on time, call. Show that you're responsible you know? My daughter, she sends me a Snapchat, she's like 'mommy, I'm here, I'm gonna be late, sorry'. You know? And me, I have to be like, okay. She's sending me where she's at."

Open communication, active listening, empathy, and compromise are key to preventing IGC in this community. One mother talked about a specific technique she uses with her daughters to be able to talk about issues regarding covering up and dating:

> "I'm not really strict with what my girls wear, or my boys. Um, I talk to my girls about boys, and dating and, you know, what is boys all about and, what they look for and, we have once a month family circle time at home and we talk about it. No judgments, you can say how you feel. If I don't listen to them, I don't talk to them, who else will they go to? So I do listen to them, I say 'hey, I'm the first person you wanna come to see', you know, talk to them. 'I'll give you good advice, I will not judge you' and I talk to them when their heartbroken, and just comfort them, and give them some advice […]. So I'm open-minded when it comes to that subject."

Social capital is also apparent at the community level. All of the participants brought up the important role that community support plays in their lives. For example, one daughter said:

> "Like you have a lot of, like people like you around, so like a lot of Somali people here and, yeah, so it's really nice. 'Cus there's like Somali people here, like next door, and next there... So it's nice."

Another daughter said:

> "I like that we have like a place close to us that can help us with a lot of things, like [this neighborhood], it help us, like, there's people you can talk to and stuff like that. A good community, really."

Mothers also shared this sentiment. One mother said:

> "Somali family is here. So I'm not alone, me and my kids, if we have some problem we help each other. That's why our community is very nice people."

Another mother said:

> "This community, yeah. They helpful, they are helping right now for the boys, for the girls… But I always, I come here, I look around…"

One of the most poignant examples of social capital in this community is illustrated by one mother's quote:

> "One of my organizations, what they did was one time, when the election happened, and they elect Trump, like a lot of people were scared. Like were very very scared. Like, they thought that they were going to be shipped the next day. And with the kids at my youth program, we did was, we had a big event where government people, and community members or immigration, everybody come. And where they talked— over like 100 people showed up, and people talked, asked questions… you know? Like they felt more secure after they talked to like the, you know, like the city council or the mayor, all that stuff. They felt very, like, less worried."

This sense of belonging and purpose also comes about through shared values. For instance, both the mothers and daughters highly value their Somali identity. The daughters exhibit a lot of pride in their Somali roots and fully embrace their identity as Somali-American. One girl said:

> "I feel like [in Somalia] is where my love is. Like, and it's not to be rude to this country because I love this country too, but I feel like, if I— when I'm here, I've felt so much dis-welcome, like that I'm not— felt so much like I'm not supposed to be here. […] But then like in Somalia, like they want me there, […] I'm them, I'm one of them. […] Somali is my first language, and that's my first culture too, like my instinct reactions to things are usually what a Somali person would do, before an American person. […] And sometimes the way I think, like a lot of things, when I see things, and I'm just like, I think about and I'm like, that's just— I'm just saying that 'cus I'm Somali, like anybody else would not think like that."

Another girl said:

> "I'm Somali. I wanna really speak my language fluently. I want to know my culture. You know? […] But I'm American but I'm Somali, I actually speak Somali, I'm from Somalia, I have a language, I have a culture, I have such a big culture, and I'm so into my American culture, you know? I already know about America. That's boring. Let me go, let me go learn more about my Somali culture."

Another girl said:

> "Most of us are here for education because like, I mean, back home there's like a lot of other things happening. And if we're like educated, we could like go back there and stop it and fix everything and all that. So I feel like mostly we're just here for our education and a lot of us want to like go back and like do something about it after we get educated about everything else."

Similarly, several mothers talked about the importance of teaching their daughters to value their Somali identity. For example, one mother said:

> "But I'm not fight [with my daughters], but I try to best. I have to, you know? It's not only me. Indian people. Asian people. Everybody, if we not teach our kids, one million kids in United States Somalian, if we not, you know, teach our culture, they lose our culture. When they back home, what they have? Nothing. Back home they say 'get out, you not Somalian, you American, we don't care if you speak Somali'. But then it doesn't have any— you know? Our culture. That's why we try to push our culture. We not complain American, but culture, every country they have a different culture. So we do the best. We don't want our kids lost."

Having this cultural identity makes the daughters feel like they're not lost, that—even though they often experience identity conflicts, confusion, hostility, and discrimination—they do fit in somewhere, they are wanted somewhere, they know who they are.

Discussion

The aims of this research study were to (1) examine the social-ecological environment that is driving IGC among Somali refugee and immigrant women and Somali-American girls living in a particular neighborhood in Seattle, WA and (2) illuminate the experiences and perspectives of these women and girls as a way to enhance the discourse on refugee and immigrant health. As predicted, Somali refugee and immigrant women and Somali-American girls are experiencing IGC largely because of the intergenerational acculturation gap.

The acculturation gap is a product of the drastic differences that exist between Somali and American cultures, which leads to a differing pace in acculturation between the mothers and the daughters. Somali culture is collectivist: it values interdependence and respect for

authority and family elders. Somali culture is also heavily influenced by Islamic values, such as familial honor and reputation. On the other hand, American culture (or at least the dominant American culture) is individualistic: it values independence, autonomy, and egalitarianism. In other words, Americans tend to value the *self*, while Somalis more commonly value the *collective*.

In this particular community, the acculturation gap mainly manifests around four gendered domains: marriage/dating, covering up, going out, and domesticity. This is because gender—and the attitudes and behaviors associated with it—is constructed differently within US and Somali cultures. In the US, gender is constructed within the context of individualism, independence, and egalitarianism, while in Somalia, gender is constructed within the context of collectivism, familial honor and reputation, and obedience. Within this cultural context, people are inherently connected and depend on one another; therefore, the decisions that a woman makes are inevitably going to affect the people around her, especially her family. For these reasons, women and girls in Somalia are expected to be pure and modest and bring honor to the family—which often translates into covering up their bodies, taking care of the household, and refraining from engaging in sexual activity (or dating) until marriage. For example, as many of the mothers mentioned, if their daughter doesn't cover up, or if she wears "weird" or "tight" clothes, then that choice is going to reflect poorly on her family.

In the United States, however, women and girls are expected to exercise their individuality and freedom of choice, particularly since third-wave feminism, which often translates into adopting attitudes and acting in ways that resemble those of men's, e.g. having a career, holding positions of power and control, expressing one's sexuality freely, etc. This does

not mean that US culture is somehow more equitable for women than Somali culture. Both cultures can be sexist and/or promote gender equity in different ways. The point is that the meaning and manifestation of gender is different between the two cultures, which creates a clash in what the Somali women and Somali-American girls are expected to do. On the one hand, the girls are learning what it means to be a woman in school, among their peers, and through the media; on the other hand, they are also learning what it means to be a woman at home, through their moms and families, and through their religious beliefs. Therein lies the discordance, which leads to identity conflicts and IGC.

In summary, the acculturation gap, which results largely from discrepancies in the contextualization of gender roles and expectations, is the main driver of IGC between Somali immigrant mothers and their first generation Somali-American daughters living in this particular neighborhood in Seattle. Somali refugee and immigrant women and girls must negotiate two sets of conflicting norms and values when integrating into US society, often resulting in acculturative stress, which, coupled with migration-related trauma and challenges—including fear, perceived lack of safety, identity conflicts, increased economic stress, and homesickness—put great strain on Somali mother-daughter relations and lead to IGC.

But the acculturation gap is not solely at play when considering the causes of IGC in this community. The broader social-ecological context plays a very significant role in either enabling or protecting against IGC. Violence in the neighborhood increases mothers' fear and parenting stress, leading to even stricter parenting practices with their daughters, thus increasing IGC. Additionally, while the United States offers more opportunities and freedom for Somali refugees and immigrants, the country's white supremacist foundations coupled with the

current political culture—which exacerbates racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia—negatively affect the communities wherein these women and girls live, work, and play. Fear of "the other" and psychological distress are heightened in this environment, as the women and girls have to endure recurring acts of discrimination and hostility. This often increases tensions and identity conflicts, putting additional strain on mother-daughter relations and enabling the occurrence of IGC.

Yet, Somali women and girls show a great deal of agency and resiliency in the face of such complex and pervasive challenges. Their relationships and networks are strengthened through trust, shared values, community support, and a sense of belonging—i.e., social capital—which acts as a buffer against IGC and the negative health outcomes associated with IGC. Social capital helps alleviate some of the fear and psychological distress related to the acculturation gap, parenting, migration-related challenges, neighborhood violence, and the current political culture. Social capital also promotes empathy, tolerance, and open communication. It perpetuates social cohesion and gives meaning to the lives of these women and girls, ultimately decreasing the chances for IGC to occur.

It is important to note that this study contains some significant limitations. First, the use of interpretive data must be indicated as a limitation, as cross-language research has the potential for altering meaning.[51] Second, data analysis was conducted by only one investigator, since the study was the product of one graduate student's Masters project with limited funds. Thus, the lack of inter-coder reliability must also be considered a limitation of this study. Third, it is important to acknowledge the investigator's background as an advantaged, white, Western

graduate student as a limitation as well, since it might hinder accurate representation of the research participants' life experiences when conducting data analysis.[44]

Reducing health disparities in migrant populations requires centering the experiences of the most marginalized,[52] actively inquiring about their strengths and needs as they relate to health and wellbeing, and improving the societal conditions—including institutions and systems—that affect health outcomes.[44] The implications for global public health are many. This research helps improve public health program planning and implementation, particularly for refugee and immigrant populations, in a way that is culturally appropriate. It also helps empower the communities themselves, because the implication is that their experiences matter, that what they have to say is important, and that they themselves have the self-efficacy to improve their health behaviors and environments to be able to thrive in a society that does not always welcome them.

As shown in the current study, Somali refugee and immigrant women and first generation Somali-American girls are learning how to negotiate the complexities of racial/ethnic and gender relations[16] as well as living with multiple marginalized identities as Muslim immigrant/first generation women of color within the multicultural context of US society. In this particular context, IGC has become a serious issue affecting these women and girls at individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels. Ultimately, IGC leads to increased psychological distress, maladaptive behaviors, identity conflicts, and a decreased sense of self-efficacy, which makes it particularly difficult for these women and girls to advocate for their needs and rights.

This issue calls for more research, both quantitative and qualitative, to better understand the complexities and subtleties that drive IGC in different migrant communities and how this impacts their health and wellbeing. Similarly, more programs need to be developed to adequately meet the needs of migrant populations using a community-based, culturally appropriate framework. The importance of cultural appropriateness in public health programs cannot be understated, not only because it increases the effectiveness of such programs, but ultimately helps eliminate health disparities in refugee and migrant populations.

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